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The University of Dayton

News Release

March 25, 1994

Contact: Mary Harvan or Teri Rizvi

UD PROFESSOR WINS NATIONAL CATECHETICAL AWARD, ALSO WRITES BOOK ON NEW CATECHISM

DAYTON, Ohio -- When Thomas More Press publishes the first U.S. translation of the new Roman Catholic catechism this spring, it will publish a companion piece: the Rev. Robert Hater's book *The Catechism of the Catholic Church: New Directions in Catechesis*.

Hater, a professor of religious studies at the University of Dayton and a Cincinnati diocesan priest, says that his book "attempts to situate the catechism" in contemporary U.S. culture and in the context of Catholic religious education since the 1950s.

"The best way to look at this catechism is as a reference work," Hater says. "We have to incorporate the content of the catechism within Jesus's story and the history of the church. In other words, we can't see this as something in isolation; it's got to be part of the whole picture."

Hater's book was commissioned and reviewed by the National Conference of Catechetical Leadership, which recently named him the 1994 recipient of its national Catechetical Award. The NCCL will honor Hater at its annual meeting in Fort Mitchell, Ky., April 11.

Hater says that one of his strengths is his combination of roles, as professor, priestly minister, speaker and writer on a variety of catechetical and theological issues, including the spirituality, evangelization and the identity of the priest.

"While I'm very actively involved in the priestly ministry, I can see the priesthood from a little different perspective, which, I think, bishops and priests appreciate," says Hater, who averages about one talk a month and estimates he has spoken in about 80 different dioceses in the last 20 years.

As a catechist and writer, he also deals with the question of Catholic identity. He considers the new catechism, a 500-page volume about the basic teachings of Catholicism, to

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be much needed, especially in the post-Vatican II years when "practically a generation of people ... came through religious instruction with a not-very-clear idea of what it meant to be a Catholic."

Hater says many people who grew up in the late '60s and '70s don't understand "some very fundamental things, like Scripture, God, Jesus, sin, grace, conscience formation, Mass, sacraments and social justice."

While the catechism focuses on the content of the Catholic faith, catechists must decide how to use it, says Hater, who reorganized the religious education office of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati at the request of then-Archbishop Joseph Bernardin in 1973.

"People who try to take a balanced approach to catechesis today" are concerned "that the catechism not be used to insist that everyone does it exactly this way," Hater says.

"This catechism was intended primarily for bishops, priests, teachers and textbook publishers," he says, distinguishing content from method. "Catechesis is primarily about conversion and formation. Information can be an important part of the conversion process. But information in itself is not sufficient."

Church community, prayer, sacraments, liturgy and other experiences and exchanges of faith are also critical in the catechetical process, he says. And teaching methods must be appropriate to the age, culture and circumstances of people involved.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: For interviews, contact **Father Bob Hater** at (513) 229-4490 or (513) 541-4611.